

Special Tri Board Meeting  
September 25, 2013

Present: First Selectman Gayle Weinstein; Selectman David Muller; Selectman Dennis Tracey; Finance Director Rick Darling; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito; Finance Chairman Jerry Sargent; Melissa Koller; Michael Carter; David Finkel; Patti Kopas; Steve Ezzes; Dr. Colleen Palmer; Sonya Stack; Sara Spaulding; Phil Schaefer; Nina Daniel; Denise Harvey; Dana Levin

**This meeting was recorded and videotaped. Copies are available in the Selectmen's office. The meetings are available for viewing online via the Town's website.**

**Update on Current Town economic data and housing market-** Ms. Weinstein said that Social Services has increased by a couple of cases so we will be watching this as we go into the next budget season. The Town Clerk's office is doing very well with total gross receipts up about \$30,000 year to date.

**Discussion regarding Fiscal Year End 2012/13-** Rick Darling said at the end of the fiscal year, we thought that there would be an operating deficit. The Board of Finance approved a supplemental appropriation to the operating budget in the amount of \$93,000 of which \$56,000 went to the police department and \$37,000 to other areas. We exceeded expectations and are turning back about \$30,000 to the general fund. The favorable areas were health insurance and legal costs. We expect the fund balance to be close to 9.6 million or 14.6% of the total annual budget amount.

**Board of Education current fiscal year budget update-** Dr. Palmer said every school system looked at their security post Newtown. They made adjustments to security mid-course during the year which impacted their budget internally and they adjusted internally some funds to cover that. 98% of the budget was spent exactly as planned even though they had some unexpected expenditures including \$275,000 in Special Education cost overruns.

There were some other events that impacted on the Board of Education budget this year. In the certified salary account, there was a transfer of \$400,000. The district had some additional turnover savings so it looks as if they were able to save \$134,000 but sometimes when teachers separate from the district there are also legal separations that have a cost impact.

They settled the AFSCME contract until the fall of the fiscal year. They had to anticipate the increase for AFSCME employees and put it in the budget. They had budgeted \$103,000 and it was a little more.

In August 2012 the district looked at its enrollment and reduced some teaching positions and additionally reduced an Assistant Principal from full time to .60. The reductions resulted in \$112,000 of savings. In expenditures it appears that they saved \$100,000 on speech and language teacher but they could not find a qualified person in the salary account to pay someone as an employee so they transferred \$100,000 to the consultant line. In order to have greater clarity in the Board of Education Budget Dr. Palmer and Dr.

Keating have offered to come to every Board of Finance meeting this year and provide an update on the Board of Education.

Dr. Keating said they receive students throughout the year that have special needs and that happened this past year to the tune of \$276,000 in the special education cost center account and another \$28,000 in transportation. That is one of the areas that they are concerned about and they want to bring that to the board's attention.

They have saved approximately \$900,000 in energy and reduced their budget by almost 50%. It's been a combination of their Energy Education Program, competitive bidding and other things that they have put in place. They had 9.8% colder degree days which required more energy and the budget had to be increased towards the end of the year.

They put \$93,000 into the internal services fund at the end of the year. Their claims are projected to be almost ½ million beyond projection. The fund balance is down to 2.2 million from 2.9 million so that budget has been impacted by claims this past year.

Dr. Keating said that the total encumbrances for last year totaled \$71,000 of which \$45,000 was for a settlement for Special Education. They had to work their budget down to a minimal amount towards the end of the year in order to break even for the year. They are returning \$1, 485 from supplement for mile of safety and \$13,571 from encumbrance from 2012.

Dr. Keating said enrollment is up about 75 students over projections. Because of that they had to hire three teachers, one was budgeted in the budget, one was carried over from the 2012/2013 budget but there is one position that has not been covered in the budget. They are concerned about that and wanted to bring it to the attention of the boards.

**Current status of BOE Operating Budget 2014/2015-** Dr. Palmer said as they look at the future, for next year, they know that they are not rebidding the health insurance and they have been very aggressive in energy savings. There are no big savings on the horizon and it is important to share with the Boards that the fiscal situation is different for the Board of Education this year. It would require a minimal increase of 2.46% simply to maintain current levels. They will work on the Budget in October and November and will expect to have a budget that they are finalizing in December to be presented to the Board of Education in January so the number will be further refined. Dr. Palmer said they wanted to share that they cannot do a zero budget or a negative budget this year again.

**Current status of BOE Capital Budget 2014/2015-**Dr. Keating said that the Kaestle Boos study that was done has been a great guide for them. They have talked about how it may be time to think about a refresh on that study.

Capital budgets are put together with a Tier 1 and Tier 2 request. Normally, Tier 2 becomes Tier 1 the following year. Last year in Tier 2, they had a partial roof replacement at Hurlbutt North House for \$84,000 and that is something that needs to be

repaired. Also included was renovation of instructional space at the high school and the middle school. \$150,000 is scheduled in Tier 2.

There are 9 underground oil tanks that need to be replaced and two are scheduled for next year. They also have the continuation of the classroom door replacement which is \$62,000 and the next phases for bathroom upgrades at the Middle School and the High School. That rounds out the list at \$658,000.

On the Town side, Ms. Weinstein said that we will be getting RFP's in January 2014 for the GIS system. The other big project was Police Department technology upgrades. The goal of the police department is to replace the main file server/domain controller, the remote access (Citrix) server, and the remote access gateway (Citrix Secure Gateway) server.

Regarding the school's current year Capital projects, Dan Clarke said that they demolished the portables in back of the Middle School. The locker rooms on the old side of the gym have been renovated. They began the first phase of the classroom door replacement at the Middle School and should be going out to bid very soon. In the Middle School they did floor tile abatement and replaced it with vinyl tile. There is a new PA system on order for the Middle School. The upgrade of the rest rooms at the High School has been started. The refurbishing of the High School tennis courts was done earlier in the summer.

**Discussion regarding enrollment trends and its impact on budget and space needs-**

Dr. Palmer said that before the tragic events at Newtown, the Board of Education had discussions with the Town about underutilized space in the school district. That included the four schools, central office and the bus depot. They had discussed openly the idea of trying to maximize the space at WIS and have room to separate off the entire North House for other uses. The Annex had outlived its life span, and there are Town Hall and Board of Education employees that are going to be misplaced. After the events at Newtown, the Board of Education felt that they should not talk about that anymore.

**Discussion regarding Town and School facilities studies-** They have entered into a contact with an architectural firm in partnership with the Town to revisit the use of space in the district. They are putting everything on the table and looking at everything except the High School. There has been tremendous concern of parents regarding shared space at Hurlbutt with all of the security issues that they have addressed since Newtown. They have asked as part of the study that architect secure an independent security evaluation of sharing space to see if there are any other infrastructure changes that would need to be done in terms of security.

Ms. Weinstein said that they did finish the site evaluation study for the Police department and they will be talking about it at the facilities committee meeting in October. They came back with two options, a standalone building adding on to the existing space. Space needs are going to be the focus for next year. The Library received a large bequest from

Mr. Vitale and the Library Board will be using it to do a space needs study and renovate the interior of the library.

**School and Town Capital projects update, including a discussion regarding the High School Windows and Doors project-** Allen Swerdlowe, chairman on the Building Committee presented a power point on the proposed project. They hired a firm called KG&B and they did a comprehensive report.

Regarding funding, Dr. Keating said there is \$857,000 left, some from bonding and some from a supplemental of \$250,000 from last year. There is \$326,000 in State grants pending. The \$326,000 was approved several years ago. The question is, what is available as eligible expenses from the redesign of the High School. The Middle School project will go through, and she believes that we will additional funding because of the higher than anticipated costs.

They have a request before the Board of Selectmen and Finance to reallocate \$200,000 from another capital project. If that's approved, that will give us available funding of \$1,383,000 leaving a balance of \$38,000.

There was much discussion on the potential to bond for this and other school capital projects. 5 out of 6 Board of Finance felt the Town did not have an appetite for it.

**Update and discussion regarding the SRO-** Ms. Weinstein asked if the MOU between BoE and the Police Commission was approved by the Police Union. Bill Brady said the union had not seen it but the Police Commission and the Board of Education have approved it. Ms. Weinstein asked if the Union needed to approve it since they are setting duty hours which are defined by the contract and performance evaluations which are not in the current union contracts. Mr. Brady said they are not making this part of the union negotiations at the present time. It is an assignment by the Chief of Police. Chief Troxell said there is a clause in the union contract that the chief can make assignments. It's not a promotion and doesn't involve an increase in salary as it is just a change of working hours.

Ms. Weinstein asked if an attorney had looked at the MOU and the union contract to make sure that they're not in violation. Mr. Brady said they would show it to Town Attorney and he will bring it up at their meeting on Tuesday. Ms. Weinstein wants to make sure that before this is signed, that it is consistent with the union contract and they are not setting us up for a potential grievance or a lawsuit.

Ms. Weinstein said she has a good idea of what the SRO is going to be doing during the school day, but she doesn't know what the SRO will be doing the other days of the year. Mrs. Deorio, High School Principal told the Boards what she thought the role of the SRO would be. Chief Troxell said that 180 days is 10 months a year. During the summer months, they can use the officer to offset overtime costs or used at the schools for summer programs or preparing the school for opening in the fall.

Ms. Weinstein asked if they had a public meeting where they have solicited public comment on what people think about the SRO and having an officer in the school with a gun. Dr. Palmer said they have talked about it at various Board meetings and have invited parents in. She has never had a concern expressed to her by any parent. Ms. Weinstein said she is not concerned, but has gotten some calls this week from people who are concerned.

Mr. Sargent said it would be very helpful for them to understand what the job description of the SRO is, before the Town makes the investment.

Ms. Weinstein asked about budget offsets from the school, and whether there would be a reduction in the number of security guards. Dr. Palmer said that they have been reviewing their internal security. A change was made to one shift of one of the three security guards at the High Schools, so that there would be security after school hours. They could look at reducing some of the hours of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

At 11:01pm a motion made, seconded and carried to enter into executive session.

**Executive Session: School Security Update-**

At 11:09pm a motion made, seconded and carried to adjourn executive session and close the meeting.

Respectfully submitted

Judy M. DeVito  
Administrative Assistant  
Approved 11/7/13